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NNSA Celebrates 100th Shipment of LEU Ahead of Schedule
Part of a program blending down nuclear weapons grade highly enriched uranium

AIKEN, S.C. – The National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) has reached an important milestone in its efforts to dispose of surplus weapons-usable material. The 100th shipment of low enriched uranium (LEU) recently departed the Savannah River Site (SRS) in South Carolina to Nuclear Fuels Services in Erwin, Tennessee, four months ahead of schedule.

It is part of a NNSA nonproliferation program to blend down surplus weapons-grade highly enriched uranium (HEU) to LEU for peaceful use in electrical power generation by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). Once downblended, this material can no longer be readily used in nuclear weapons.

“The HEU Blend Down project not only supports our nonproliferation objectives of eliminating nuclear materials declared surplus to U.S. national security requirements, but it also reduces future year security costs. Once this material is downblended it no longer requires the same level of security that HEU does,” said NNSA Deputy Administrator for Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation Paul Longworth.

In addition to accomplishing important nonproliferation goals, the program will result in significant cost savings to the government since a much more costly disposition path based on downblending the HEU and disposing of it as waste will be avoided. Savings realized by TVA for its reactor fuel costs will be shared with the U.S. Treasury. The HEU Blend Down Project is an excellent example of a collaborative effort between the NNSA, the Department of Energy’s Office Environmental Management and the TVA, Longworth added.

The HEU Blend Down project modified existing facilities at SRS to enable them to blend the HEU down into LEU. Last year, this project won the Secretary of Energy’s Excellence in Acquisition Award. This prestigious award was given in recognition of excellence in project management that saved over \$30 million and was completed 6 months ahead of schedule. By completing the 100th shipment four months ahead of schedule, NNSA and SRS are continuing this record.

Established by Congress in 2000, NNSA is responsible for enhancing national security through the military application of nuclear energy. NNSA maintains and enhances the safety, security, reliability and performance of the United States nuclear weapons stockpile without nuclear testing; works to reduce global danger from weapons of mass destruction; provides the United States Navy with safe and effective nuclear propulsion; and responds to nuclear and radiological emergencies in the United States and abroad.

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